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DES MOINES IOWA

Editor's letter



Andrew Ballard, AIA
Editor, Iowa Architect

Welcome!

We all want to see through the mist, separate wheat from chaff, and unbury the lead. But man, editing sure is tough! (He sighs dramatically, wiping sweat from brow.) Fortunately, refinement is a core instinct for architects. Regardless of budget or scale, architects are trained to do a lot with a little, wringing the value out of a project brief. Rather than leaning into extravagance or excess, architects live to give “bang for the buck.”

The Spring issue focused on projects that help move our economy. Now, we look at how architects act with economy. These projects demonstrate how design elbow-grease packs an experiential punch, how thoughtful planning runs on a budget’s faintest fumes, and how sensitive architects respectfully tune the old in service of the new. We also see architects extending editorial acumen to artistic endeavors, curating images and materials to provoke existential reflection. Parsimonious production, sufficiently fortified, triggers rich environmental response.

What constraints most influence design’s distillation? What lenses best focus a project’s potential?

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AIA Iowa Citizen Architect Advocacy Track Participants 2023

The general public's view of architects and the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter (AIA Iowa), is shaped first and foremost by how the individual members interact with their clients and their communities. The AIA Iowa Public Relations Committee first introduced the AIA Iowa Citizen Architect Participant (CAP) program in 2008 to recognize members who represent AIA's values to their communities through public service and advocacy. CAP is a recognition program bestowed

upon all members who meet qualification criteria and is intended to encourage all AIA Iowa members to actively engage in their communities and share in the AIA mission.

The Advocacy Track of the Citizen Architect Program was added on later to highlight specifically the need for members to be true advocates for the profession in the legislative setting. CAP participants in the advocacy track are an AIA Iowa Member: AIA, AIA-E, FAIA, FAIA-E, Assoc. AIA, Int'l. Assoc. AIA, or

Student Affiliate; have met with or had a one-on-one conversation with their individual state legislators at least once this year; and have made a monetary donation to their local legislators (or other state elected official of their choice) any time during a given year.

Thank you to all our AIA Iowa Citizen Architect Advocacy Track participants this year; your dedication to the profession helps us strongly advocate for the architecture profession.

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Years of Membership

Longstanding AIA Iowa Members Recognized for Commitment to the Chapter

Every year at the Chapter's annual Spring Conference, the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter (AIA Iowa), recognizes licensed members who have shown their longstanding commitment to the Chapter and the profession through years of continuous membership.

2023 Years of Membership Recipients: Above 25 Years

25 Years

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Scott T. Blum, AIA
Rodney L. Curtis, AIA
Robert A. Hartig, AIA
John D. Karmann, AIA
Rachel A. Lewis, AIA
James R. Meier-Gast, AIA
David L. Noyes, AIA
Sarah C. Overton, AIA
Michael A. Ruden, AIA
Timothy R. Schroeder, FAIA
Donna M. Stratton, AIA
Rob S. Whitehead, FAIA

Members receive recognition certificates starting at 25 years of membership, followed by 35, and every five years in subsequence. This annual observance is special to AIA Iowa members and inspires others to achieve a similar commitment; 2023 was no different. Chapter leaders

35 Years

Thomas R. Bartlett, AIA
Russell J. Bitterman, AIA
Daniel C. Channer, AIA
Gregory G. Gowey, AIA
David J. Harrison, AIA
Larry W. Moore, AIA-E
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Russell D. Ver Ploeg, AIA
Thomas G. Wertzberger, AIA
Steven P. Zbylicki, AIA

were thrilled to recognize 40 long-term members with Years of Membership Certificates and acknowledgement at our virtual Spring Conference on April 7.

Congratulations and thank you to each recipient for their continued membership with the Chapter!

40 Years

Michael R. Broshar, FAIA-E
David F. Martin, AIA-E
Dale H. McKinney, AIA-E
Craig Nelson, AIA-E

45 Years

Leland K. Gayer, AIA-E
James R. Sandercock, AIA-E
Stephen J. Stimmel, AIA

50 Years

Alan W. Bowman, AIA-E
Thomas R. Clause, FAIA-E
Arnold E. Fischer, AIA-E

55 Years

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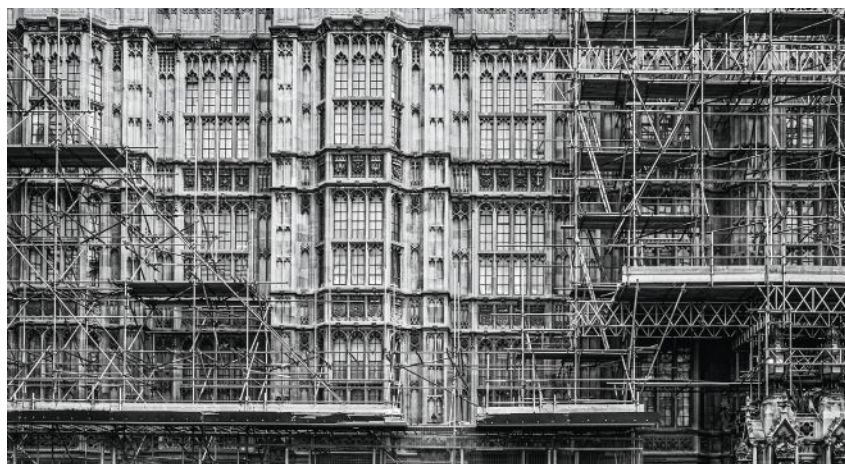
CALDER IN HIDING

SANJAY JANI, AIA, ON FINDING AN IMAGE

WORDS : GAUTAM PRADEEP, ASSOC. AIA **IMAGES :** SANJAY JANI, AIA

Orange streaks mingle with deep blues. The evening sun renders structural beams translucent, washing a cityscape over the facade of RSHP's NEO Bankside apartments. The colors' depth, the beams' sculptural forms, and the light's scenic overlay merge into multidimensional ephemera. The award-winning result, "City Reflections and Refractions," is one of several moments Sanjay Jani, AIA, collected with his 35mm camera during strolls around London during a recent trip (the Fujifilm X100V has a

23mm, 35mm full frame equivalent, F/2.0 lens for the curious). Another image from the same journey is "New Gothic." This high-contrast image impresses the complexity of two eras by overlaying temporary scaffolding's incidental structural expressionism over the Houses of Parliament's gothic maximalism. "City Reflections and Refractions" received first place, and "New Gothic" received an honorable mention at the 2022 American Institute of Architects' (AIA) Photography Competition.



Balancing art and architecture has been central to Jani’s professional practice. He has served on boards of the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter (AIA Iowa); Downtown Iowa City; the University of Iowa Museum of Arts; and the Public Art Committee for the University of Iowa. He and his wife, Jigna Jani, co-founded AKAR in 1998. Its studio and gallery functions have since branched into Akar Design, ClayAkar, and AKAR ARchiTecture.

According to Jani, architects are taught to see beauty. He gravitated to photography as a means of expressing it. Cameras now nestle in everyone’s back pocket; however, possession of a tool does not guarantee its mastery. Photography that consistently expresses creative intent while yielding surprise and delight demands passion and dedication. Sharing one’s impression of beauty with others is a skill. Jani attributes his clear photographic communication to repetition and daily commitment. While many threads weave together to form a successful image—proportions, compositions, and so on—Jani admires photographic art because, just like in architecture, “everything surrenders to light.”

His daily commitment to photography was tested during the pandemic when travel and adventures ground to a halt. However, making the best of the situation, Jani looked around his own home and studio for inspiration, and his passion for the natural world unlocked a treasure trove of subjects that bloomed into focus. The plants and flowers in his backyard now became objects of focused photographic exploration. This pandemic-induced exploration resulted recently in multiple awards from the Royal Horticultural Society in London. One photograph in particular that won in both the Overall Adult and Plants category was “Saffron Sunset.” A truly remarkable image celebrating the quiet strength of a few crocuses that had sprouted next to his studio against a blurred but recognizable Iowa sunset.

As a child growing up in India, Jani was introduced to photography’s power through *National Geographic* magazines. Years later, he channels the curiosity and wonder he found in those pages into his own award-winning images. He continues to photograph the world around him every day, taking nothing for granted.

A NATURAL EXPERIMENT

PETER P. GOCHÉ, AIA, ON TEACHING AND PHENOMENA

WORDS : KIMBERLY ISHMAEL IMAGES : PETER P. GOCHÉ, AIA

Peter P. Goché, AIA, is an experimental spatial phenomenologist who strikes a harmonious balance between practice and teaching with experimental art as a unifying theme.

In his art practice, Goché employs site-adjusted installations to address the theoretical and practical problems of materiality in post-industrial areas. He describes his art as “both phenomenological in the sense that I think about the material practice as well as what the effects of the materials are that I use in my installation work.” Goché extended his creativity into curation when he founded Black Contemporary, an experimental site dedicated to atmospheric drawing.

His architectural practice, Goché Inclusions, has run for about 24 years and primarily focuses on rehabilitation and restoration. Goché says, “These projects can be tedious but in a lot of ways align with what I do artistically.” He also serves as a professor of practice at Iowa State University, coordinating and instructing design studios at Iowa State University’s Department of Architecture. He led workshops for the Venice Biennale in 2014 and 2018.

Goché’s multifaceted approach to balancing multiple professional roles result from his creative, experimentalist nature. You never know if you do not try. Goché maintains that his passions and interests are most explored and enjoyed through artistic experimentation. “Practice did not satisfy my appetite enough regarding creativity and production because it was wrought with regulations, budgets, client desires, and lack of free thinking,” he says.

Growing up on a farm in northeast Iowa provided Goché a unique opportunity to observe and explore the spatial possibilities of different agricultural buildings. Seeing purpose-built structures vacant inspired him to use discarded materials for art installations that highlight the spaces’ existing beauty and sometimes melancholic nature. Goché began his installation work in 1996 after a nudge from Will Bruder, FAIA. The show he curated with 10 artists, “Rebirth,” garnered a high turnout and positive reviews.

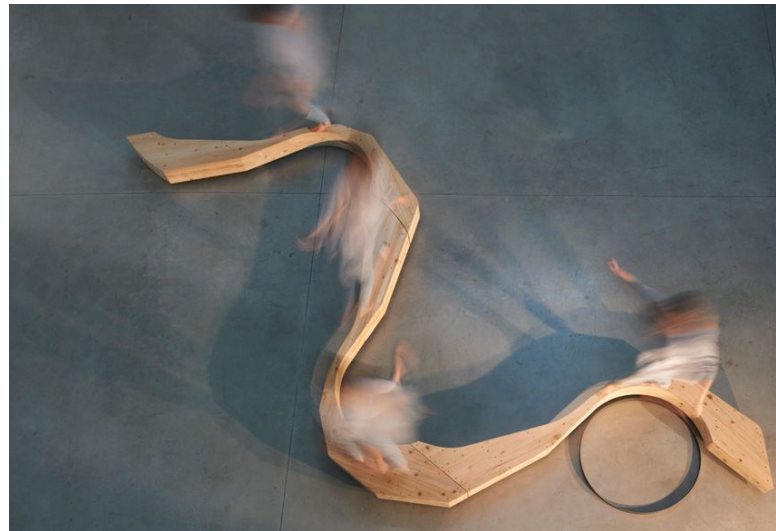
Goché transformed a portion of the Black Heritage Seed Farm in Ames, Iowa, into a studio for his own work and that of artists from around the world. He named the buildings Black Contemporary, honoring the farm’s history and Arcadian condition as a point of departure, and began focusing on time and light. Goché now describes Black Contemporary as “a type of



atelier whereby expert architects, artists, curators, theorists, and philosophers in the field of spatial phenomenology are invited to participate in the examination of ongoing research assemblies and present their work to the agrarian public through on-site workshops and field talks.”

In the forward of a Black Contemporary monograph, Catie Newell (artist/educator at the University of Michigan) writes, “It is important to note that Black Contemporary does not merely house this work, but, as Goché has demonstrated, the work is in constant dialogue and collaboration with the space itself.” This collaboration between the spaces, artists, architects, curators, theorists, and philosophers is why Black Contemporary has successfully established itself as a community think-tank.

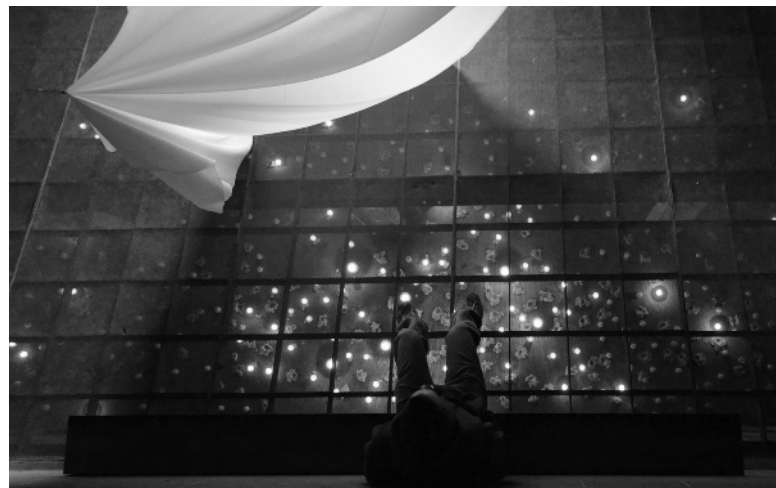
Goché preaches that persistence and consistent practice of creative prowess are the fundamentals for success and inspiration within the vast field of architecture. When asked for advice on integrating passion with profession, Goché responded



with a quote from a farmer named David Burns: “The work will teach you.” By this, Burns means you must do the work to understand it. Goché lives by this and heavily integrates it into his pedagogy.

About 27 years ago, Goché was presented with the option to become an educator at the collegiate level. Although he had never considered teaching, he decided that the job would provide him with practical opportunities, stable benefits, and an opportunity to display and expand his creative experimentalist installations. Once Goché started the work, he began to better understand himself, his art, his philosophy of spatial phenomenology, and his sources of inspiration.

Goché demonstrates that the field of architecture is chock-full of creative opportunities if the willingness for persistence and innovation is present. The future belongs to those who look toward its potential, and the past belongs to those who remember and honor its remnants.



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WHERE PAST AND FUTURE ARE GATHERED
**CONTINUITY AND CHANGE AT THE
NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN STUDIO**

WORDS : ANDREW GLEESON **IMAGES :** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO **ARCHITECT :** STUDIO MELEE



April 25, 1997

This date is written on the exposed roof joists of Studio MELEE's office in West Des Moines' historic Valley Junction, an office the firm affectionately calls "Neighborhood Design Studio." This date and this name encapsulate two ethos of the practice: to steward materials with reverence and to embed architecture within its context. These twin goals are achieved in this adaptive reuse project, which originally housed the Olivet Church in the 1950s. After the congregation sold the building, it served as an auto shop, retail, and office space. The windows in the sanctuary were bricked over, and a garage door was

punched into the wall. A 1997 renovation kept the former sanctuary as storage, removed the flood-damaged lobby, and added a two-story office area. This is the patchwork state Studio MELEE found the building in when they purchased it more than 20 years later.

Left: The result of the remodel is a living record of past and present. **Top right:** The drywall covered walls in the conference room near the front entrance is in the furthest state of finish. **Bottom right:** The upper mezzanine is reached by a dramatic perforated steel stair screened by one of the exposed stud walls.

Jan. 20, 2020

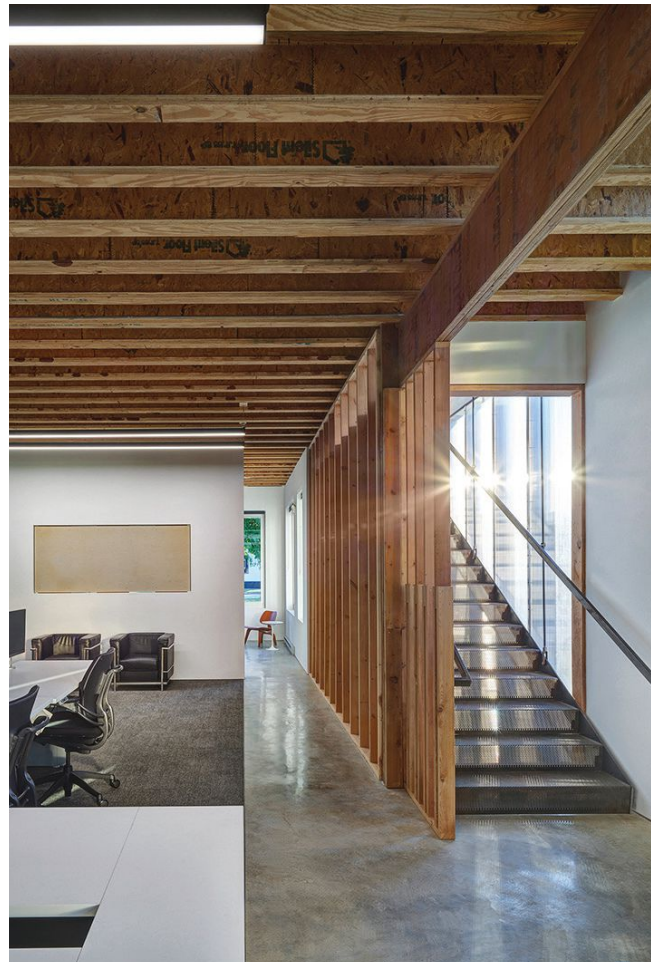
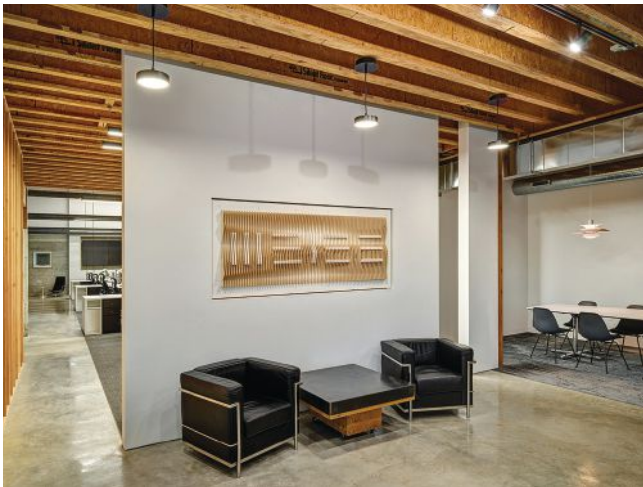
The studio began by gutting the interior of the space; they liked the exposed material structure. The partial demolition itself became an excuse to celebrate construction materials from different eras and to reveal what is often hidden by more refined finishes. The studio believed that maintaining most of the old building, instead of tearing down and starting fresh, would add continuity to the fabric of the neighborhood, celebrate a multilayered history, and save on cost.

Oct. 11, 2021

The completed interior didactically exposes unconcealed methods of construction. The space is, therefore, a test-case environment in a visual state of becoming and potentiality. Standard prefabricated fiberboard I-joists—punctuated by technical markings and branding logos—hold up a second-floor mezzanine and create a complex visual texture overhead. Exposed open stud walls on the main level, set to the standard 16-inches-on-center spacing, offer pleasing vertical proportions. The drywall covered walls in the conference room near the front entrance is in the furthest state of finish.

The studio space features original concrete block walls complete with clotted grout and speckled flakes of old green paint; however, not everything in this adaptive reuse project is original. To open up the studio and create a double-height space, the firm removed the gable of the original sanctuary. The distinctive vertical grain of the old Douglas fir roof studs were redistributed throughout the office. The new roof utilizes a system of lightweight wood and aluminum trusses, yet another exposed structural system for use in potential future projects. The extended interior north wall consists of a new industrial glass garage door, stud walls with vibrant swirls of plywood backing, and a band of high windows, which floods the studio with glare-free daylight during most hours of the working day.

The original concrete floor complete with varying textures, outlines of old walls, cracks, and discoloration adds character to the studio. Strategic carpeting throughout furthers the didactic concept. Curtis Ehler, AIA, states, “The project includes flooring from different vendors. The carpet tile in our conference room is more expensive with a heavier backer, while the carpet in the open studio is a low-pile carbon neutral product. We used a variety of in-situ material samples to show clients the differences in price points, quality, and intended use.”



Top and bottom left: The space is a test-case environment in a visual state of becoming and potentiality. **Right:** Standard prefabricated fiberboard I-joists—punctuated by technical markings and branding logos—hold up a second-floor mezzanine and create a complex visual texture overhead.

Untreated Homasote paneled walls with nozzle jet diffusers separate semi-private offices and meeting spaces. These act as informal pinup walls but also reinforce environmental awareness; any new material or ventilation system brought into the project were held to strict standards of sustainability and energy efficiency. The panels' steel framing aligns with lateral bracing overhead. Steel grid rails conceptually nod to the historic Rock Island Line Pacific Railroad, which founded Valley Junction in 1893. The train rail leitmotif also appears in the lobby's salvaged sliding door handles and the kitchenette cabinet pulls. The upper mezzanine is used as a social space and a materials library and is reached by a dramatic perforated steel stair screened by one of the exposed stud walls. These new steel elements were fabricated from repurposed materials in collaboration with Frank Hunter, who runs the nearby IronKlad Art studio.

The exterior binds these various methods of construction, with vertical cedar siding tuned to the surrounding, largely residential, neighborhood. Ehler noticed three existing window sashes on the north and south exterior of the sanctuary had been covered by concrete block during the structure's conversion into storage. The design team reintroduced these windows and

used their spacing to create a consistent rhythm on the facade. Those three windows repeat on the mezzanine level, activating a visual upward shift, and exaggerating the tension between the overall horizontal form and the vertical grain of the details. This shift from first to second level is mediated on the facade by the semi-exposed steel stair, which is partially screened by open aluminum bars reminiscent of standard aluminum stud construction. The western upper-level facade cantilevers over the front entrance and is banded with perforated steel vertical louvers (playfully spaced out according to the golden ratio) to fend the harsh western sun. This high-concept architecture floats atop the vernacular ground floor entrance.

The result is a living record of past and present, echoing a kinship with the nearby historic buildings—themselves products of years of addition, neglect, remodel, and revitalization. Studio MELEE's sensitive renovation is a reminder that, with effort, architects can do more with less and that value in design is not always found in the new and the premium.

May 16, 2023

Title taken from "The Four Quartets" by T.S. Eliot.



Top left: The exterior binds various methods of construction, with vertical cedar siding tuned to the surrounding, largely residential, neighborhood.

Bottom left: Curtis Ehler, AIA, noticed three existing window sashes on the north and south exterior of the sanctuary had been covered by concrete block during the structure's conversion into storage. **Bottom right:** The design team reintroduced the existing windows and used their spacing to create a consistent rhythm on the facade, which repeat on the mezzanine level, activating a visual upward shift, and exaggerating the tension between the overall horizontal form and the vertical grain of the details.





OFFICE RENOVATION

Leveraging Historicity and Materiality: The Strength of a Soft Hand

WORDS : RAE HOWE IMAGES : COREY GAFFER ARCHITECT : KNOP ARCHITECTS



Opposite page: The furniture resonates with the existing brick’s visual warmth and balance the white built-in shelving, media center, and columns.

Top: Spare furnishings invite us to appreciate what is present *and* what is absent. **Bottom left:** The second floor of 112 Southeast Fourth Street now houses workspaces, including an airy and refined office. **Bottom right:** Limiting design decisions to furnishings provided an opportunity to work within Cody Knop, AIA’s, own ethos.

112 Southeast Fourth Street, on the east side of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers, is one of the oldest buildings in the Market District neighborhood. The 1800s building has a rich history—including years as a nightclub—but recent years had seen it fall into disrepair.

Fortunately, an exterior restoration has stripped back decades of additions and non-original materials and interior renovation has made room for a host of new residents, offices, and commercial space. The first floor now houses a brewery. Residential apartments occupy the third floor. The second floor houses workspaces, including an airy and refined office by Knop Architects.

Knop Architects, founded by Cody Knop AIA, in 2021, has already built a reputation for curated and artful builds. Knop says the

heart of his firm is “designing projects that are carefully crafted and thoughtfully integrated—quiet architecture that’s timeless.” This office renovation was Knop’s second time working with Alex Hall, an area restaurateur who needed a home base to manage operations. After working with Knop Architects to create Franka Pizzeria (also featured in this edition on page 28), Hall was quick to select Knop Architects for his next project.

Knop immediately saw potential within the tight budget and timeline. “There’s a lot we can leverage,” Knop recalls thinking. While some might have seen preserving the existing brick and heavy timber structure as a limitation, Knop thought it created a unique opportunity. “The historic finishes allowed us to help

reduce costs. The finishes were already there.” To Knop, limiting design decisions to furnishings provided an opportunity to work within his own ethos.

Knop prefers “simple and light-handed intervention”—perfect for the conditions of the renovation. Under the historic preservation process, any alterations made had to be reversible, even down to carpeting. “The thing that’s important—if you’re not familiar with the historic tax credit process—is the wood floor. Whatever you’re adding to the interior project, the National Parks Service (NPS) and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) like to have things that aren’t altering the original condition. Hence, removable carpet tile. In the event that our client outgrows the office, the carpet is really just furniture they’re moving with them. The built-in space goes back to its original historic state.”

The project wasn’t about rewriting the past or overtaking the narrative but acting as an editor, making unseen changes to strengthen and beautify what was already there. The best editors recognize strength where it exists and work quietly to magnify it, maintaining the author’s voice.

The workstations’ rhythm follows the space’s dense row of columns. Desks are arranged in line with the column grid, fostering a sense of separate spaces. Existing windows helped accentuate the flow. “We’ve got a series of regularly spaced windows that also follow the rhythm of the structure. We flanked the conference area and the lounge adjacent to that to allow daylight to penetrate deep into the space,” says Knop.

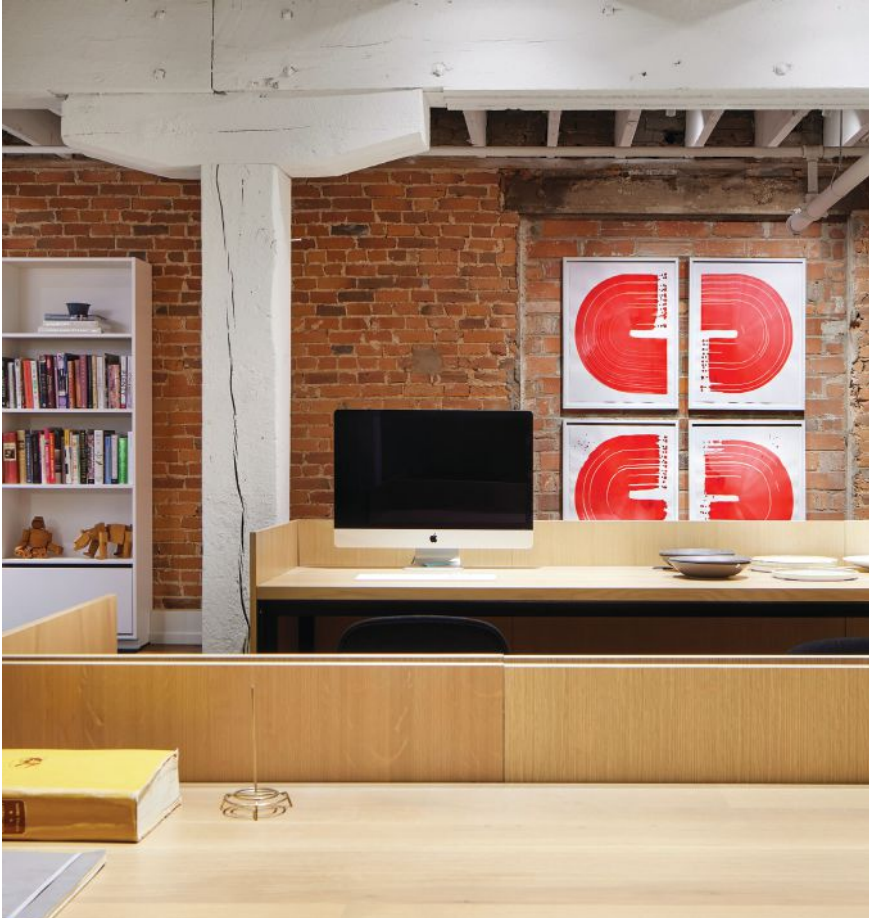
Modern furniture is strategically arranged. Even as it makes up the bulk of the renovation, it does not visually intrude. Wood desks and tangerine chairs resonate with the existing brick’s visual warmth and balance the white built-in shelving, media center, and columns. Sleek and fresh mingle with aged and patinaed. A light touch creates a versatile space. Spare furnishings invite us to appreciate what is present *and what is absent*.

One of the renovation’s most subtly effective elements is the ceiling. Knop maximized both height and spatial effect by routing wiring and other services through and around the existing historic structure. The result is a game of hide-and-seek. We see the computers, the large monitor in the conference room and lobby, the light fixture above the table—but we don’t see the wires or outlets powering those devices. (An envious situation for anyone struggling with their cable management.) “The biggest challenge was navigating how to fully plumb and circuit the space without it being intrusive physically and aesthetically,” says Knop.

Knop Architects optimized the project brief by leaning into curation and integration. The result helps original elements shine. “I think one of the things we’re most proud about the project is that, as architects, it’s hard to have a very quiet, soft hand,” says Knop. “We were able to really let the existing conditions and historic building be somewhat the star of the show. Our project really takes a backseat to that and looks at ways to complement the original design as opposed to compete with it.”

Top and bottom left: Office renovation before and after. Under the historic preservation process, any alterations made had to be reversible, even down to carpeting. **Top and bottom right:** Desks are arranged in line with the column grid, fostering a sense of separate spaces.









NORTHERN VESSEL REMODEL

WHERE THE PAST AND THE FUTURE MEET FOR A CUP OF COFFEE

WORDS : MEG KENNEDY **IMAGES :** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO **ARCHITECT :** MA ARCHITECTURE

A place where the old and new meet. Where tradition and innovation intersect to form a modern coffee shop of the highest quality. These phrases describe both Northern Vessel coffee company and its newly renovated location in the historic 1201 Keosauqua Way complex in downtown Des Moines. Completed in November 2022, the space is the first brick-and-mortar location for Northern Vessel. The company’s slogan, “Forward, Together,” is a perfect fit to describe the remodeling project MA Architecture undertook in the 110-year-old masonry building.

Built in 1910, the historic brick building was originally The Reliable Rug Company, run by accomplished and recognized businesswoman Emma Owens Ferrington, who expanded the business and built the complex after the death of her husband in 1899. In 1920, the then-rectangular building was modified to accommodate construction of Keosauqua Way, creating a unique triangular shape with storefronts spanning both Keosauqua Way and 12th Street.

“With storefront on multiple sides, it was an ideal location for a small shop that desired a commercial street front presence,” says Anna Squier, AIA, associate principal at MA Architecture. T.J. Rude, the owner of Northern Vessel, agreed with this viewpoint when he toured the building prior to the remodel and saw the potential to transform the space into something one of a kind for Des Moines, for Northern Vessel, and for the historic structure.

Working with Black Swan Developers and Hildreth Construction as the contractor, the design team at MA Architecture developed a plan to accentuate the existing assets of the building, make thoughtful updates to the space, and tailor it to the specific needs of Northern Vessel. “The resulting project respects the historic character while introducing modern elements that support Northern Vessel’s production, retail, and patron functions,” says Squier.

For Northern Vessel, the space needed to support their production, service, and unique customer seating needs, all while aligning with the coffee company’s distinctive brand and mission. “Each component of Northern Vessel’s brand is intentional,” says Squier. “Our design needed to follow suit. Everything is curated, from the drinks to customer service to the design. The space supports Northern Vessel’s unique approach to coffee culture with coffee production on display and nontraditional seating that provides a unique visitor experience.”

The production area, which can produce more than 500 gallons of coffee daily, is located in the triangular portion of the building, benefiting from the daylight that pours in through the restored wood storefront windows with transoms and cast-iron columns and showcasing the production process at street level. Inside, these same storefront windows



Top: The storefront windows provide seating for customers in the restored window platforms with beadboard front. **Bottom left:** In 1920, the then-rectangular building was modified to accommodate construction of Keosauqua Way, creating a unique triangular shape. **Bottom right:** A point-of-sale counter faces the entrance—a white oak wood slat wall wrapped with black granite and lit by Northern Vessel’s recognizable logo sign.



Left: The interior of the space echoes the themes of bringing the historic and classic elements into alignment with a modern aesthetic. **Right:** The production area, which can produce more than 500 gallons of coffee daily, is located in the triangular portion of the building, benefiting from the daylight that pours in through the restored wood storefront windows with transoms and cast-iron columns and showcasing the production process at street level.

provide seating for customers in the restored window platforms with beadboard front. “The window seats are replicas of what was originally there and are unique and popular places to sit and bathe in the sunlight with a great cup of cold brew,” says Aust. “The design also leverages having glass storefront on a majority of the two facades, which takes advantage of the high car traffic count on [Keosauqua] Way and also the neighborhood scale on 12th Street with the original 1910 wood storefront and streetscape.”

The interior of the space echoes the themes of bringing the historic and classic elements into alignment with a modern aesthetic. “The new features are clean and minimal, non-competitive with the original character,” says Squier. “The minimalist interior blends the original historic character with sleek lines, plaster walls, and white oak accents. The original plaster walls are painted white, while new walls contrast in black. White oak millwork is inserted into the space, highlighting areas of importance—where coffee is ordered and where coffee is enjoyed.”

The historic aspects of the space were preserved and enhanced wherever possible. The interior plaster walls were repaired before being painted white and cast-iron columns were revealed and restored. Some components of the space could not be fully salvaged; in these instances, the design team made respectful renovations. For example, the ornate pressed metal ceiling was able to be restored in parts of the space but not others. In this case, new pressed metal ceiling segments were selected to closely match the historical product. While most of the original wood flooring was missing or not able to be restored, new wood flooring was made to match the existing historical flooring found elsewhere in the building.

Upon entering, customers encounter a space that is at once new and old. A point-of-sale counter faces the entrance—a white oak wood slat wall wrapped with black granite and lit by Northern Vessel’s recognizable logo sign. In this zone of the building, customers order coffee and food and peruse the

company’s merchandise. The same production area seen from the street is also visible beyond the counter, bringing the two zones together. “The wood slat wall that identifies the point-of-sale counter creates some separation, keeping all patron flow on the patron side and all production flow on the production side,” says Squier. “The functions are physically separated, but still clearly visible to one another and from street to street.”

At the center of the seating area is a triangular-shaped wood slat and granite table infilled with fresh, green plantings, which was a priority for Northern Vessel. While the table is a modern insertion, its shape clearly references the historic building’s form. “The unique triangular-shaped portion of the building was a challenge in initial space planning,” says Squier, “specifically how to nicely organize production, service, and seating in such a distinctive footprint. We decided to embrace the triangular shape and introduced a seating area with a custom-shaped triangular table filled with plants. Now, the seating area runs parallel to both streets, providing patrons with direct views to multiple sides and ample daylight.”

“We worked very closely with T.J.,” says Squier, regarding the design process. “The space needed to be functional for the business, match the quality of Northern Vessel’s product, and provide a special experience for the patrons. A close collaboration throughout the entire process was essential. We were there to help guide and implement their vision through the architectural solution.”

The result of this collaborative design process is a resounding success. “It supports Northern Vessel’s unique coffee culture and reflects the carefully curated Northern Vessel brand,” says Squier. “The company strives to provide an exceptional coffee experience through the quality of product, atmosphere, and service.” MA Architecture worked strategically with the existing building to create a space that does just that. It has become a destination in Des Moines and is an anchor not only to this historic building but to this developing neighborhood.



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FRANKA PIZZERIA REMODEL

A New Project for a New Firm

WORDS : EMILY GIST IMAGES : COREY GAFFER ARCHITECT : KNOP ARCHITECTS

Franka Pizzeria, located in the Des Moines suburb of Clive, is characterized by its high attention to detail, its multifunctional pieces, and its story. The first thing to catch your attention is the crisp aroma of burning wood and baked bread. The first thing to catch your eye is the pizza oven. A slatted wood ceiling, the stacked wood display, and orchestrated light fixtures guide your senses to the centerpiece of the experience: the pizza.

Top: The first thing to catch your eye is the pizza oven. **Bottom left:** With careful attention to the functional, atmospheric, and sensory potential of each found, selected, and crafted component, Franka Pizzeria demonstrates how to turn a tight budget quietly operatic, even during trying times. **Bottom center:** A slatted ceiling layers the space's volume, screens overhead services, and offers flexibility for lighting positions, should the owner wish to move furniture in the future. **Bottom right:** Criteria ranged from functional to aesthetic.





Already a former pizza restaurant, victim of COVID-19's disruption, the space fit restaurateur Alex Hall's vision and budget for Franka Pizzeria. Hall reached out to Cody Knop, AIA, whom he'd collaborated with before, and hired his newly established firm, Knop Architects, for the project. Work needed to be done. The original space had competing geometries and garish finishes that didn't match the refined-yet-casual look that Franka Pizzeria was going for. However, the team was on a strict budget and timeline (they completed the project in just under two months), so the changes needed to have a substantial visual impact with minimal disruption.

"The exercise of the project became: What elements of the previous pizzeria can we reuse, which would help save costs,

and what elements needed to be revisited?" Knop says. Criteria ranged from functional to aesthetic. Since the previous tenant was a pizzeria, the kitchen and back of house needed little reworking. "Early on, the entire team, including our client, realized we needed to try to keep our intervention and the remodel to a minimum from a kitchen standpoint and really focus our efforts on the front-of-house spaces—the spaces that the people who are dining there actually see," Knop says.

Knop and his team gave the pizza oven's existing location pride of place. "The pizza oven is in the exact same spot; we just pulled off the tile, detached it from the wall, and made it a perfect cylinder. It became a focal point of the restaurant—it became a big, centralized piece of art, if you will." Other elements of food



preparation took center stage as well, allowing patrons to see their pizza being made as part of the dining experience. Knop adapted the pizza oven's adjacent wood stack into a feature element. The hot-rolled steel plate on the wall behind the oven is an easily cleanable dramatic backdrop.

A slatted ceiling layers the space's volume, screens overhead services, and offers flexibility for lighting positions, should the owner wish to move furniture in the future. Knop recalled, "We quickly

discovered, by opening up some of the ceiling tiles in this front space, that we had an additional 6 feet above that that could be exposed and could create some drama." The lighting system it ensconces has dual functions—providing ambiance and enhancing the colors of the food.

With careful attention to the functional, atmospheric, and sensory potential of each found, selected, and crafted component, Franka Pizzeria demonstrates how to turn a tight budget quietly operatic, even during trying times.

Top: The lighting system it ensconces has dual functions—providing ambiance and enhancing the colors of the food. **Bottom left:** The original space had competing geometries and garish finishes that didn't match the refined-yet-casual look that Franka Pizzeria was going for. **Bottom center:** Knop adapted the pizza oven's adjacent wood stack into a feature element. **Bottom right:** Elements of food preparation take center stage, allowing patrons to see their pizza being made as part of the dining experience.



"I love that my design philosophy and skills have grown alongside my path of discovering my purpose and values as an architect. The moment I realized architecture can create experiences and stories to empower people and bring them hope, I understood becoming an architect was the right path for me."

- Yifan Sun, Assoc. AIA

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Above: Existing upper floor railings were updated in black to recede from new exterior wood elements.

GRAND PRIX APARTMENTS

A Thoughtful, Respectful Renovation

WORDS : MEG KENNEDY **IMAGES :** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO **ARCHITECT :** ASK STUDIO

The Grand Prix apartment building in Des Moines was built in the 1960s as motel-style multifamily housing near Des Moines University. Its neighborhood, the area around Grand and Ingersoll avenues, is a vibrant mixed bag of architectural styles from mid-century and earlier and includes single-family homes, apartment buildings, and small businesses. When Des Moines University announced its intent to relocate to

West Des Moines in 2019, the Grand Prix's owner saw an opportunity to improve the apartment building in tune with the adapting neighborhood.

Cole Davis, Assoc. AIA, who led ASK Studio's renovation efforts, described the Grand Prix as unusual. "It is not often as architects we are asked to make an outdated '60s motel-style structure appealing," he explains. The challenge was to



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attractively and thoughtfully renovate the building for less than a million dollars in ways that emphasized the building's architectural strengths.

The design team took inspiration from the building's strong mid-century proportions. "Our solution was to downplay the stylized components that existed while reemphasizing the rigid organization of the building in a modern way," says Davis. Originally, the building was typical of the 1960s motel archetype, with a row of dwellings accessed from an exterior corridor," says Davis. While the existing brick and mansard roofs had not aged well stylistically, the building's characteristic mid-century organization left flexibility to make simple, impactful changes.

Difficult decisions had to be made regarding which components would be removed and replaced. Those that remained are at times cleverly deemphasized. Existing upper floor railings were updated in black to recede from new exterior wood elements. "The existing railing has twisted steel pickets with ornate detailing," says Davis. "We elected to focus on more impactful areas of the building rather than to replace the railings, so the color scheme became super important in how we downplayed these existing pieces to make them visually disappear."

The faux mansards, however, could not be so easily tamed. "By removing the sections of mansard roofs and implementing a modern architectural panel, we were able [to] remove the outdated motifs on the building and introduce a product that not only created drama on the exterior, but also reinforced the textural surface qualities seen in the existing brick that was retained," says Davis. In addition to recladding the building, the design team added wood panels to its exterior corridors, increasing each entrance's privacy with a welcoming, modern feel.

ASK Studio's smart design moves enhanced the Grand Prix's beauty and function, preserving what worked about the existing architecture rather than treating it as disposable.

"As designers, we must leverage the constraints we are given to produce solutions that solve multiple problems. Decisions based on aesthetics alone don't maximize opportunities. Finding ways to layer in functionality allows us freedom to implement more meaningful changes. I believe that this project was fully derivative of that line of thought, and I hope it will be a good model for the surrounding community," says Davis.



Top left: The Grand Prix apartment building in Des Moines was built in the 1960s as motel-style multifamily housing. **Bottom left:** The design team took inspiration from the building's original strong mid-century proportions. **Top right:** ASK Studio's smart design moves enhanced the Grand Prix's beauty and function, preserving what worked about the existing architecture rather than treating it as disposable. **Bottom right:** Grand Prix's outdoor common area.



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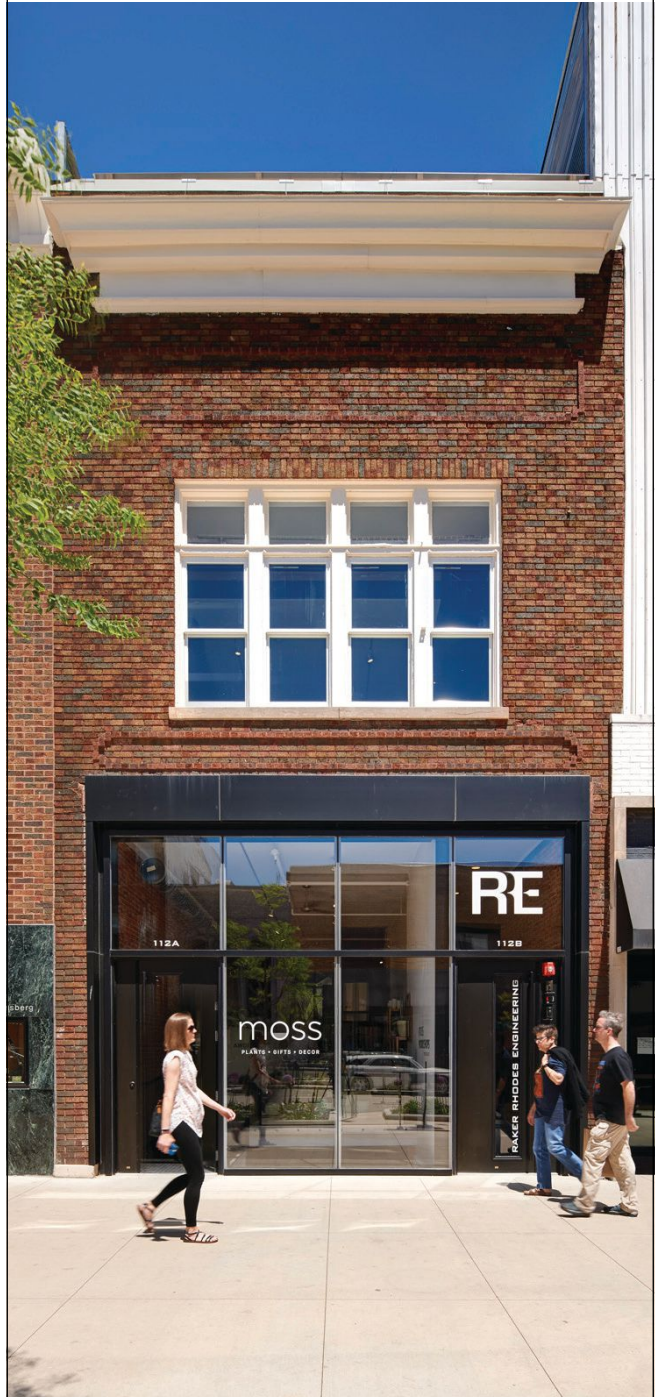


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